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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002191

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MUTHANNA: PC CLASH SHOWS POTENTIAL FOR ELECTIONS  
STRIFE

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Paul O'Friel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is a PRT Muthanna reporting cable.

12. (C) Summary: A recent clash between rival tribal members on the Muthanna Provincial Council (PC) nearly degenerated into inter-communal violence in late June. Although the standoff was eventually resolved peacefully, the incident underscores the potential for tribal tensions to provoke election-related violence, even in a "quiet" province like Muthanna. End Summary.

13. (C) A quarrel between Provincial Council members Hakim Khazal Khasan of the Burkat tribe and Mohamed Radhi Sultan al-Zayadi of the rival Zayadi tribe was sparked by the resignation of one of the three members of the Council's Integrity Committee, which Hakim chairs. Hakim rejected a move by a Mohamed Zayadi, a clever politician with a reputation for corruption, to nominate himself or a fellow Zayadi tribal member to fill the vacancy. The confrontation between Hakim and Mohamed quickly escalated from a heated exchange of words to a shoving match between the two men's respective bodyguards. The police helplessly stood by as the Council building was rapidly surrounded by armed members of the Burkat and Zayadi tribes. Only the swift intervention of other tribal mediators prevented the tense stand-off from deteriorating into outright violence. Mohamed Zayadi subsequently maneuvered a resolution through the Council suspending Hakim's membership. Hakim is now preparing to take his case to the national level. He has mustered 15,000 signatures on petition for reinstatement that he plans to present to Prime Minister Maliki and the Council of Representatives.

14. (C) COMMENT: Hakim and Mohamed Zayadi lead two of the major opposing independent political blocs competing for power in the upcoming provincial elections (Hakim leads the Mid-Euphrates Assembly; Zayedi the Assembly for Muthanna). Their quarrel on the Council and efforts to discredit each other are symptomatic of the underlining tribal tensions that will only increase as the elections approach. Even in a "quiet" province like Muthanna, the potential for election-related violence and unrest is extremely high. End Comment.  
CROCKER